US and Texas Constitutions and Institutions

PSCI 2306.501

Fall 2025

Professor: Jessica Lambert

E-mail: jessica.lambert@unt.edu

Class: TuTh 12:30-1:50pm

Frisco Landing Room 266

Office Hours: by appointment

Course Overview

This course provides for an introduction to the laws and institutions of American and Texas governments. We will study the structure of government, including its constitutional foundations and the branches of federal and Texas governments. We will pay particular attention to the constitutional issues of federalism, civil rights, and civil liberties, and emphasize the unique features of the Texas Constitution. We will also apply our understanding of American and Texas government to current events and topics.

Course Learning Objectives and Outcomes

Students who master the content of this course will be able to:

1. Explain philosophical traditions that inform the U.S. and Texas constitutions (including classical liberalism, republicanism, federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances)

2. Evaluate the balance of power between the branches of government, state and national governments, and the people and the state

3. Evaluate constitutional and extra-constitutional powers of the three branches of government at both the Texas and national levels

4. Evaluate the democratic nature and effectiveness of the U.S. and Texas institutions of government (including their constitutions)

Required Reading:

#### 2306 Department Bundle V4: U.S. and Texas Politics with 2306 Workbook (CIAG 14e, TexPol 11e, 2306 Workbook 7e)

Jocelyn Evans & Kristy Michaud / The Texas Politics Project

978-1-954890-63-3

The workbook can be bought by purchasing a passkey from the bookstore, paying online after opening the workbook in canvas, and there is a free trial that allows you to use the first 3 chapters or first 30 days free.

The workbook is worth a total of 30% of your grade so make sure to gain access ASAP

Course Grade Distribution

1. Attendance 10%
2. Chapter Questions 10%
3. Workbook Assignments 10%
4. Investigations 10%
5. Group Project 15%
6. Three Exams 45% (15% each)

Important Dates:

Sept 2nd: No Class

September 15th: Section 1 Exercises Due (Chapters 1-5)

September 16th: Exam 1

October 20th: Section 2 Exercises Due (Chapters 6-13)

October 21st: Exam 2

Nov 24-30th: Thanksgiving Break

November 19th: Section 3 Exercises Due (Chapters 14-19)

November 20th: Exam 3

December 2nd and 4th: Project Presentations

Finals Week: Optional Final Exam (Comprehensive)

Course Policies, Procedures, and Assignments

Grading: Grading will follow a standard scale: 90% is an A, 80% is a B, 70% is a C, and 60% is a D. *I do not change grades unless I make a computational error.* Exam grades are typically posted on Canvas within 48 hours after exam time. I will submit your final grades, for view at my.unt.edu, during finals week.

Communications: If you have any questions about the class, please see me during my office hours or schedule an appointment to see me. For fastest response please email me at the email address listed at the top of the syllabus. If you choose to message me in Canvas, please keep in mind that I do not check Canvas as often as email and my response will be delayed.

If you feel you are struggling and/or if you are doing poorly on exams, please reach out to me ASAP so I can help you develop a plan for improvement!

Soomo Workbook

Your Soomo Workbook has 3 types of grades: Chapter Questions (which are the multiple choice questions that are not Workbook Questions or Investigations), Workbook Questions (which are also multiple choice and have a chapter quiz at the end) and Investigations. I will drop your lowest grade from each of the 3 types of assignments!

To encourage you to work through the chapters before each exam, the chapters associated with each exam are due the day before each exam at 11:59pm. Any chapters that you do not complete before this deadline will be considered late, and we will assign a 50 percent penalty for any assignments completed within one week after the due date. For your own benefit, complete the assignments as we progress through the semester and according to the dates associated with each topic and workbook chapter.

To receive credit for your answers, you must save, submit, and post them. Please double check that you do so.

**Chapter Questions**: Your online textbook has two types of chapters: Central Ideas in American Government (CIAG) chapters and Workbook chapters. The CIAG chapters have multiple choice questions at the end of each page. For all the regular text chapters there are multiple choice questions at the bottom of each page. **You get 3 attempts to get these correct**!

**Workbook Assignments**: Each workbook chapter is organized around the four learning objectives adopted by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (critical thinking, communication, personal responsibility, and social responsibility). Each chapter includes four essays that expound upon course concepts and give students an opportunity to apply those concepts. **These multiple choice questions can also be attempted 3 times!**

There are chapter quizzes in each workbook assignment. Chapter quizzes can only be attempted twice.

**Investigation Assignments**: In each of the regular chapters there is a section labeled “Investigation.” Investigation assignments give students an opportunity to engage course material on a higher level, engaging in analysis and explanation. Although regular chapter multiple choice questions can be answered repeatedly until a student gets them correct, the questions asked in **Investigation assignments can only be attempted twice.**

Exams: There will be four exams in this course: three unit exams and a cumulative final exam. Exams will cover material from the main chapters (with the exception of the investigation assignments).

One (1) exam score will be dropped. Students always want to know if they have to take the final exam. If you are happy with your grade in the course after you have taken the first three exams and completed all of the assignments, you do not need to take the final exam. If you want to improve your grade in the course after taking the first three exams, you should study for and take the final exam. Likewise, one low unit exam grade or missing an exam will not ruin your chances of passing the course as long as you take the final exam. Students who miss more than one exam without proper documentation will have an adverse impact on their grade.

Exam Rules and Procedures:

* You have the entire class period to complete your exam. Your exam will be taken in class on university provided laptops.
* The exam will begin promptly at the beginning of class. Do not be late. The first exam is finished in about 20 minutes. If you arrive after an exam is turned in, you will not be allowed to take the exam.
* You may use one page (front and back) of handwritten notes on each exam
* All notes (aside from your approved cheat sheet), phones, personal laptops, tablets, ear buds, and the like must not be accessible to you once you receive your exam. If these are accessible to you, this is grounds for an academic misconduct inquiry.
* The exams will be graded and scores posted in Canvas by the following day.
* You cannot retake an exam. If you have a university-excused conflict with an exam, please see the Makeup Exam policy below.

Makeup Exams: The opportunity to take a makeup exam will be limited only to students who have a university approved excuse. You must reach out to me to see if you qualify for a makeup exam. If you know of a conflict in advance, you need to let me know prior to the in class exam date.

Exam Preparation: The best way to succeed in this class is to attend class regularly, take good notes, and keep up with the workbook readings. I do not assign a textbook, but you will have access to the powerpoint slides and the workbook to help you study. Therefore, you will have access to all possible questions that I may ask on the exam. It is up to you to take the time you need to be able to learn the material and demonstrate your mastery of it on the exams.

Attendance: Attendance is required for this class and will count for 10% of your grade. You will be allowed 3 unexcused absences, which do not require an excuse, and which do not impact your attendance grade. You may only use your unexcused absences on regular class days, you cannot use them on test days, project days, or presentation days. If you have an excused absences (illness, family emergency, etc.) it is your responsibility to let me know (in advance if possible) so that you are not penalized for your absence. If you are more than 10 minutes late to class, you will not receive attendance credit.

Group Project: This project will be 15% of your grade and is something we will be working on in class throughout the semester. We start by picking groups on September 23rd; if you are absent on that day, it is YOUR responsibility to reach out to me to be placed with a group. If you do not get placed in a group by the end of the first in class project day, you will be working by yourself and

your grade will be penalized 20 points for not being in a group.

Your group will start by picking your topic; you will identify a problem in politics created by a law, procedure, or system that you believe is a problem. There will be 5 class days (listed in the schedule below and on canvas) where you can work on your group project; our class lecture will only last 30 minutes these days and your group will then have the rest of the time to work on your project. Attendance on these days is mandatory (you cannot use an unexcused absence) and also counts toward your project grade. If you have an excused absence on the mandatory group project class days, your grade will not be penalized. You will also be graded on participation on the in-class project work days. More details about this project and its requirements will be given both in class and on canvas.

Course Schedule

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November 20th: Exam 3

December 2nd and 4th: Project Presentations

Finals Week: Optional Final Exam (Comprehensive)

Group Days:

September 30th Group Day 1

October 7th Group Day 2

October 28th Group Day 3

November 4th Group Day 4

November 11th Group Day 5

Class Schedule:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Topic | Assignment |
| Week 1 (Aug 18) | Syllabus and The Founding of the US | No Class September 2  |
| Week 2 (Aug 25) | No Class and The Constitution |  |
| Week 3 (Sept 1) | Federalism |  |
| Week 4 (Sept 8) | Federalism and Review for Exam 1 | All Section 1 Exercises due September 15 at 11:59pm! |
| Week 5 (Sept 15) | Exam 1 (Sept 16)  |  |
| Week 6 (Sept 22) | Congress  | Form groups Sept 23 |
| Week 7 (Sept 29) | The Presidency and Texas Government Structure | Group day 1 Sept 30 |
| Week 8 (Oct 6) | Bureaucracy  | Group day 2 Oct 7 |
| Week 9 (Oct 13) | Review for Exam 2 | All Section 2 Exercises due October 20 at 11:59pm! |
| Week 10 (Oct 20) | Exam 2 (October 21) |  |
| Week 11 (Oct 27) | Judiciary | Group day 3 Oct 28 |
| Week 12 (Nov 3) | Civil Liberties | Group day 4 Nov 4 |
| Week 13 (Nov 10) | Civil Rights | Group day 5 Nov 11 |
| Week 14 (Nov 17) | Review for Exam 3; Exam 3 (November 20) | All Section 3 Exercises due November 19 at 11:59pm! |
| Week 15 (Nov 24) | Thanksgiving Break (No class!) |  |
| Week 16 (Dec 1) | Project Day 1 & 2 |  |
| Finals Week! (Dec 8) | Optional Final Exam | Enjoy your break! |

\*The instructor reserves the right to change this syllabus with notice\*

University Policies and Procedures

**Americans with Disabilities Act Statement:** UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one’s specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the [ODA website](https://disability.unt.edu/) (<https://disability.unt.edu/>).

**Academic Misconduct:** According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

Your first academic integrity violation is subject to a range of penalties, including failing the class. If you commit more than one academic integrity violation, you actions are subject to a review by the Academic Integrity officer. This may involve a hearing in which you are subject to expulsion.

Using AI to complete assignments in this class is considered academic misconduct.

For more information on what constitutes plagiarism, please visit: <http://abacus.bates.edu/cbb/>

### Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004): The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

**Acceptable Student Behavior:** Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at [www.unt.edu/csrr](http://www.unt.edu/csrr) .

### Emergency Notification & Procedures: UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.